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SUBJECT: Vision of the Future from the Forensics Director

¶1. Summary: Newly appointed Head of the Forensic Center in Astana has ambitious plans to improve the work of his institution. He has received approval from the Prime Minister for the construction of a new building to house the National Forensic Center in Astana. He plans to establish a Regional Forensic Academy for Central Asian and other countries in the region at the Center. He is also working to reform and develop methods to improve capabilities of the Forensic Center to provide operational assistance to law enforcement in combating drug trafficking throughout the country. End summary.

¶2. On September 11, 2007, INL Officer and Program Manager met with the Head of the Forensic Center Kairat Amankulov in Astana. Amankulov was appointed in December of 2006 and is a former police officer with long experience in criminal investigations. During the meeting he shared information about the GOK's plan to improve the forensic system in the country.

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BACKGROUND  
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¶3. In 1997, as part of democratization process, the forensics department of the Ministry of Interior was separated into a governmental institution under the Ministry of Justice. The head of the forensics department stated that the split was intended to give the forensics department independence from law enforcement.

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FUTURE AMBITIOUS PLANS  
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¶4. Currently there are 17 poorly equipped regional forensic laboratories in the country with about 600 experts. The Central Laboratory is located in Almaty. Amankulov shared his ambitious plans for a forensic development program over the next three years. The Center expects to soon receive the first large disbursement from the state budget and Amankulov has received preliminary approval from the Prime Minister for construction of a new building in Astana. His plan is to equip the center with the latest equipment that will meet all international standards. The National Forensic Laboratory will then be moved to Astana from Almaty.

¶5. Amankulov aspires to establish a Regional Forensic Science Academy in Astana. His objective is for the Academy to serve as a center for training and conferences for forensic scientists and experts in Central Asia. As a first step, the Forensic Center hosted an international conference in Almaty on September 18 and 19. Experts from Russia, China, and Kyrgyzstan attended.

¶6. Amankulov and his staff are also working to reform the forensic system in Kazakhstan. He expects that, as part of the development program, the Forensic Center will become a Committee of the Ministry of Justice. This change will give the center official status within the Ministry and all of the Center's employees will become civil servants. The Center is working to gain international accreditation and is ready to invest in training for its experts.

¶7. Amankulov is also personally invested in the development of a database to be used to identify the origin of seized drugs. He is planning to publish a handbook with a map of types of soil and drugs to share with regional forensic offices. He underscored the fact that such guide will facilitate the process of drug identification and locating the sources. He expects that in the future his Center will be able to use this information to provide analysis of growing and trafficking trends to law enforcement agencies in the region.

¶8. During the meeting he noted that because of the stabilization and development of the economy, the number of drug users is increasing, which also attracts a larger flow of drugs into the country. He thanked the USG for support in combating drugs. He also noted that even though the economic situation of Kazakhstan is improving, the Center still relies on foreign technical assistance.

¶8. Comment: Post welcomes GOK efforts to improve the forensic system. If the Forensic Center accomplishes all that Amankulov envisions, it will do much to enhance the work of law enforcement to combat drug trafficking into and through the region. End comment.

ORDWAY